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news release

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DE LA GARZA INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO RESTORE COLONIA FUNDING

For immediate release, Thursday, July 1, 1993

WASHINGTON -- Legislation introduced earlier this week by Rep. Kika de la Garza, D-Texas, would formally authorize Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funding assistance in the construction of water and wastewater projects serving communities, including colonias, along the U.S.-Mexican border.

The two bills sponsored by Rep. de la Garza seek to remedy action taken by the House of Representatives Monday that stripped provisions out of the annual EPA appropriations bill to target about \$80 million for U.S.-Mexico border water projects. The deleted language included a \$50 million set-aside specifically for Texas colonias.

Rep. de la Garza, along with other border state lawmakers, fought to keep the colonia-specific language in the EPA appropriations bill. They were overruled on the technical grounds there was no clear authorization in Federal law for targeting EPA funds to colonia projects.

"I am very disappointed with the action taken by the House earlier this week to delete the colonia-specific language. Nobody argued with us over the need to bring basic water services to the colonias. Nobody argued with us over the need to upgrade sewage treatment facilities for the communities along the Rio Grande. The targeted funding was deleted because of a technicality," said Rep. de la Garza.

However, the House appropriations bill does not preclude EPA funds going to colonia water projects, points out Rep. de la Garza. In addition, the House-passed appropriations bill creates a \$500 million set-aside fund for projects Congress authorizes by March 31, 1994.

"The legislation I have introduced would explicitly authorize Federal funding, through the Environmental Protection Agency, for water and wastewater projects to serve colonias in the states along the U.S.-Mexico border. I will do everything I can to see that targeted EPA funding for the colonias and for joint U.S.-Mexico water

treatment projects is restored in time to provide continued funding in fiscal year 1994," said Rep. de la Garza.

Another Federal law, authored by Rep. de la Garza, already authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide rural water and wastewater funds for colonia projects. Last year Congress appropriated \$25 million in USDA funds for colonia projects. At Rep. de la Garza's request, the fiscal 1994 USDA appropriations bill, approved by the House of Representatives Tuesday, again makes available \$25 million for the colonia program.

Brief summaries of Rep. de la Garza's bills follow:

H.R. 2545, the Colonia Assistance Authorization Act of 1993, would authorize EPA to make grants for the construction of water supply systems and the installation or improvement of sewers and wastewater facilities serving colonias. The bill does not set a specific funding level, but instructs that such sums as necessary be appropriated.

H.R. 2546, the Good Neighbor Environmental Assistance Act of 1993, would authorize EPA, acting through the Secretary of State, to provide financial assistance for joint U.S.-Mexico projects to construct or improve wastewater treatment facilities. The bill designates the American section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) as one of the eligible entities to receive funding. The bill does not set a specific funding level, but instructs that such sums as necessary be appropriated.

Rep. de la Garza's legislation has been referred to the House Public Works and Transportation Committee.

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